

Highfield Childrens Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119067
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313172
Inspection dates	19–20 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Jackie Barnes

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–4
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Holt
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Hindle
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2003
School address	Wright Street Chorley Lancashire PR6 0SL
Telephone number	01257 262441
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Age group	3–4
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Children's Centre is located in a new building close to Chorley town centre. It includes the maintained Nursery school and a wide range of other community facilities such as access to health professionals and learning opportunities for adults. Independent committees manage the care for children from birth to three years and the Cool Kids Club for morning, lunchtime and after school provision. Although most children in the Nursery school attend part-time, some have full time Nursery education partly paid for by parents. The majority of children have only a year in the Nursery school, leaving at the end of the first year of the Foundation Stage to join the Reception year in primary schools. Almost all the children are from White British backgrounds. A few are of Asian heritage and some of these children are at the early stages of learning to speak English. A small number of children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The inspection focused on the quality of education in the maintained Nursery school and the impact on this of the other provision in the Children's Centre.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good nursery school. Those parents and members of the community who make use of the children's centre are glowing in their praise for the welcome they receive and the opportunities that are provided. Parents have confidence that their children are well cared for, safe and make progress. The findings of the inspection show their confidence is well placed. When they enter the Nursery, individual children vary considerably in what they know and can do; when they leave, standards are typical of children of their age. A range of stimulating activities, both indoors and out, together with skilful encouragement from experienced staff, enables all the children to settle quickly and to make good progress especially in their personal development.

Good teaching and organisation enable the children to work with adults to gain a better understanding of an activity of their own choice. Children make good gains in their knowledge and skills, especially in spoken language. Progress is particularly good when new experiences are introduced by an adult working with small groups of children. Learning is good overall though not all staff have the skills and confidence to make sure the children make the best progress they can in every activity, especially in outdoor play. The quality of care is outstanding. The children clearly enjoy being in the Nursery and are keen to learn. Regular guidance and practical experiences linked to understanding how to keep healthy and safe successfully encourage them to be independent and confident. They work well together and many have a good awareness for their age of the needs of others. Some can sustain their concentration for prolonged periods of time when pursuing their own ideas and investigations. Those children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively by the Nursery staff and other agencies, and achieve well. Almost all the oldest children have the skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age, and a few exceed these. Staff know the children well. They frequently discuss the progress of each child and record the information in individual records of achievement.

The school has sensibly allowed parents reasonable flexibility in the times their children attend. Parents report that this is helpful and most maintain satisfactory rates of attendance. The staff are well informed about the different times that every child attends and make sure that each is kept safe and actively involved in suitable learning activities. A major contribution to the smooth continuity of each child's day is made by the independent provision of wrap-around care for early mornings, lunchtimes and after school in familiar surroundings and by staff who are well known to the children.

Leadership and management are good. The development of the Nursery school into a children's centre has been well managed and has maintained the effective education that was identified in the last inspection. The positive leadership and clear vision of the headteacher, who is now the head of the Centre, have successfully integrated the Nursery school into the other facilities for childcare and the community. Governors, staff and the local authority provide effective active support. The pace of development has been brisk and has included a heavy workload for those involved in leadership and management. This has delayed the school's plans for updating the arrangements for assessing and recording children's progress. The present system is useful in planning day-to-day activities in the Nursery and supporting children's progress. It does not, however, provide the senior management with enough information to identify clear priorities for improving achievement. As a result, the school's self-evaluation, is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of the Foundation Stage is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the use made of information on the children's progress to help identify priorities for improving achievement.
- Improve the skills and confidence of all staff to support children's learning especially when using the outdoor areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are satisfactory. Generally when the children start school, their skills are below those typical for their age. However, the pre-school experience of individual children varies considerably. About a third of the children have spent time in the children's centre's pre-school nursery. These children are familiar with the centre and staff, and tend to settle quickly into learning, especially as staff know their capabilities. About half the children are unfamiliar with the Centre and some have little experience of being with large groups of children.

Children are encouraged to become involved by observing the more experienced children and, with good guidance from staff, most make rapid progress in their personal skills. In a short time almost all the children have the confidence to participate fully in the activities provided. As a result of good teaching and careful observation of the children's needs, they make good progress overall. Almost all the children, including those who are at the early stages of learning to speak English, have the knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their age by the time they leave the Nursery. A few children exceed these expectations, especially in literacy and numeracy. Some children with complex learning needs make very good progress because the care and support they receive is so effective, especially the careful identification and checking of each step of their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good. They thoroughly enjoy coming to the Nursery and relate well to their teachers. Even though many have only been in school a short time, friendships have developed. They are keen to learn and to be independent, and are clearly delighted when given responsibilities. Their behaviour is good. They know they have a part to play in keeping the Nursery tidy and not upsetting others. Some are capable of working with other children for extended periods of time and laughter is a regular feature of the Nursery day as, for example, bridges made of bricks collapse and are rebuilt, or water splashes during enthusiastic fishing for objects that float or sink. When investigating alone, the children show good levels of concentration as they pursue their own ideas, and are capable of asking questions if they are puzzled. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy stories from different cultures and most have a good understanding of right and wrong for their age. They delight in their growing understanding of the natural world, whether observing a snail retreating into its shell or seeing the seeds inside a melon for the first time. They respond

well to the daily experiences of healthy eating and physical exercise in the outdoor area, and to the guidance from staff on how to stay safe inside and outside the Nursery environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The working relationships with parents are quickly established and their views are taken into account. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and make a major contribution to the children's feeling of security and confidence. Consequently, they explore their own ideas knowing their attempts will be appreciated and encouraged. Activities are carefully planned and most staff have a thorough knowledge of the age group and can recognise when and how to intervene to move a child's learning forward. Some opportunities to do this are missed because a member of staff is unsure about how an activity can be developed further, especially in outdoor play. Expectations are high and the children usually have challenging experiences. Careful attention is given to checking each child's progress, with regular staff discussions where views are shared and decisions made about planning further provision for individual children. As a result, the staff hold extensive information about the children's progress and attainment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. All the recommended areas of learning and experience are carefully planned, with good use of resources including information technology. Visitors and visits to the locality enrich the children's experiences. The morning, lunch and after-school club provide a wide range of activities, which the children are proud of helping to choose and plan. The arrangements for the children's smooth transition from the centre's private Nursery to the Nursery school, and between the wrap-around care and the teaching time, give a continuous experience which adds to the children's confidence and makes good use of the hours they attend. Staff keep a close watch to check that children of different ages and ability experience all that is offered. More rigorous records of attendance have been introduced recently to help ensure all children have a suitably broad experience. These are working well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Personal care is outstanding and makes a major contribution to the safety and independence of the children and the confidence of parents. Formal systems for safeguarding children are in place. The arrangement to have a key worker with particular responsibility for a small group of children is effective in making sure there is current knowledge of each child's needs and progress. The grouping of children who are at a similar stage of learning for specific teaching is effective in challenging children. The school works closely with a wide range of other agencies, some on site, to provide valuable support for vulnerable children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The positive attitudes and dedication of all those involved in leading the development of the Children's Centre are reflected in the welcoming atmosphere and determination to deliver high quality services to the children and the community. Gains from the extended provision are already evident. Most children settle exceptionally quickly into Nursery. Staff and parents have readily available expertise from a range of professional agencies and parents who work have seamless childcare and education. The links with the community are strongly supported by provision such as on-site baby clinics, doctor, out-reach staff who help vulnerable families to attend Nursery, and opportunities for local childminders to meet.

The good leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in integrating the Nursery school into this wider provision. Staff have competently taken on additional responsibilities in managing new arrangements for integrating the extended childcare into the school provision. The governing body has increased in size as new governors have been attracted. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and make good use of advice and support from the local authority staff. The school's self-evaluation is generally accurate but it is not guided enough by a systematic analysis of assessment information. The school has identified the need to revise the assessment system and plans are in hand to do this in the immediate future. The school's capacity to improve and value for money are good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Highfield Children’s Centre, Lancashire, PR6 0SL

I enjoyed my visit to your Nursery very much. You helped me to see how much you enjoyed learning new things and how quickly you made friends. The staff look after you very well and make sure you are safe. Your parents told me that you learn such a lot every day and that you like to do things yourself, such as putting on your coats. I agree. Your behaviour is good. You try hard not to upset anyone and you often help each other. You can concentrate for a long time when you are interested in what you are doing. You ask good questions and some of you were able to tell me about your families and pets. You like books and stories, and many of you are beginning to count and to write well for your age. Your teachers are good at helping you to learn and also keep a close watch to see that you are happy and busy. I was pleased to see that you come to Nursery as often as you can.

I have asked your school to write down more often how well you are learning. This will help visitors like me, who don’t see you all the time, and your teachers, governors and parents to check that you are each learning as well as you can.

Best wishes to all of you!

Jackie Barnes

Lead inspector